

Statement of  
Myron P. Naneng  
Chair of Sea Lion Village Corporation Board  
before the  
Federal Lands Subcommittee of the House Committee on Natural Resources  
Hearing on Four Bills, including **H.R. 218**, "*King Cove Road Land Exchange Act*," to provide  
for the exchange of Federal land and non-Federal land in the State of Alaska for the construction  
of a road between King Cove and Cold Bay.  
April 5th, 2017  
Washington, DC

Good afternoon, Chairman McClintock, Ranking Member Hanabusa and members of the subcommittee. I am Myron P. Naneng, Sr, from Hooper Bay, a village in western Alaska. I serve as the Chair/President of the board of my Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) Village Corporation, Sea Lion Corporation, and am a board member of my ANCSA Regional Corporation, Calista Corporation. Between the years of 1990 and 2016, I was the President of the Association of Village Council Presidents, the recognized tribal organization and non-profit Alaska Native regional tribal consortium of 56 member indigenous Native villages within Western Alaska. Between 1995 and 2016 I was the Chair of AVCP's Waterfowl Conservation Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee today regarding the proposed land exchange of Federal and non-Federal land in the State of Alaska for the construction of a road between King Cove and Cold Bay.

We are concerned and oppose the proposed land exchange and road for a number of reasons. These reasons include: 1) impacts to subsistence resources, including increased ATV use, when there are other transportation alternatives for King Cove; 2) the transfer of Federal lands out of Federal hands and management for the purpose of building a road; 3) de-designating Federal wilderness lands that protect subsistence species and their habitat, which could happen anywhere if allowed at

Izembek National Wildlife Refuge; 4) State management of important subsistence species habitat; 5) communities in western Alaska face similar transportation issues to King Cove and there are community equity issues with this proposal; and 6) because of ANCSA Section 22(g), other village corporations whose lands are within wildlife refuges cannot do any improvements on their lands unless they are compatible with the purposes of the refuges.

I am a subsistence harvester, have provided subsistence resources for my family for most of my life and represent subsistence users from my village in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. The Y-K Delta region encompasses an area close to the size of the state of Oregon, includes 56 villages that face similar transportation issues to King Cove and our people hunt and fish for our sustenance. The people of the Y-K Delta are primary stakeholders of waterfowl resources, and our customary and traditional subsistence uses of birds have long sustained us culturally and for food. Virtually the entire populations of Brant and Emperor geese depend on the Izembek Refuge for feeding and staging, and because there are other effective transportation alternatives for King Cove, we cannot support this land exchange and road.

Subsistence users in western Alaska have been involved since the early 1980's in the conservation of Pacific Brant, Emperor, Cackling and White Fronted goose habitat. In 1998, AVCP's Waterfowl Conservation Committee passed a resolution opposing the proposed Izembek road, and the Committee unanimously reaffirmed that resolution twice at their spring meetings in 2013 and 2015. I am submitting a copy of the 1998 resolution with this testimony for the hearing record. My Village Corporation has been working with the US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to implement a successful goose habitat conservation plan in Kokechik Bay, where a

primary component of the plan has been to restrict ATV use. We increased Brant from 400 to 1,400 nesting pairs after implementing the plan.

Emperor geese are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act and, after decades of habitat destruction between the 1960's to the 1980's along the Pacific Flyway resulted in significant population decreases for Brant, our people made a commitment to sacrifice years of subsistence hunting and egg gathering in an effort to allow Brant to recover to the level the population is today. We have worked cooperatively with federal and state agencies within the Pacific Flyway – California, Oregon, Washington and Alaska - to develop recovery efforts through the 1984 Hooper Bay Agreement, now entitled the Yukon-Kuskokwim-Delta Goose Management Plan. Building a damaging road now, right through some of the most important and sensitive habitat for Brant and Emperor geese, would be contrary to the years of conservation work our people have done to protect habitat and boost Brant and Emperor goose population numbers.

We also oppose the road because the road would result in:

- Increased ATV use, which can be very damaging to goose habitat and that is already occurring close the refuge wilderness boundary now that a road extends there;
- The transfer of important goose habitat from federally protected status to the State of Alaska, when our people cannot count on the State of Alaska to prioritize subsistence resources and activities, including fishing and waterfowl harvest and habitat protection;
- Major effects on Brant and Emperor geese, as documented by the USFWS;
- The federal government not fulfilling its legal obligations for subsistence if the proposed land exchange and road project were to be approved;

- Lands being acquired by the USFWS that do not provide the vital habitat for Brant and Emperor geese and will not compensate for the loss of critical goose habitat;
- The de-designation of wilderness, which if it can occur at Izembek it can happen on public lands across the country. Waterfowl use habitat across the Flyways and there are other refuges and wilderness areas throughout the country that support critical subsistence resources, and are important to Alaskans and many people across the country. It is my understanding that this subcommittee has received letters from over one hundred Friends of Wildlife Refuges groups from across the country, including from Alaska and other states that members of this Subcommittee represent, such as Massachusetts, Virginia, Maryland and Hawaii.

#### Conclusion:

When our people are working together, there can be positive results, such as the increase in numbers of Brant and Emperor geese that we have experienced. But, the effort to put a road through Izembek, one of the feeding habitats for the geese, seems to be completely opposite of the effort that we are trying to make.

With hard work and open minds, King Cove can find alternative, effective transportation to Cold Bay, and Izembek will continue to provide the necessary resources that help feed and sustain all the villages of western Alaska. This is especially true during this time of taking severe conservation measures on the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers to reverse the declining Chinook salmon species, which our people in the YK Delta have relied on as one of our major subsistence food sources.